

FUTURE OPTIONS FOR DETECTING HEAT IN DAIRY COWS

Infrared (IR) cameras could hold the key to improving heat (or oestrus) detection on dairy farms, according to initial results from a FutureDairy pilot trial.

FutureDairy project leader, Assoc Prof Kendra Kerrisk, said that although the research was in its early days, the technology was commonly available.

“Infrared cameras detect differences in temperature. For example, during the swine flu outbreak, they were used at airports to identify people with raised temperatures, as an indicator of potential illness,” she said

As the technology has been used for heat detection in pigs, FutureDairy postgraduate student Saranika Talukder, set up the pilot trial to see if it could be applied to dairy cows.

She used IR cameras to detect changes in vulvar skin temperature, which can be related to stage of oestrus.

As this was a small pilot trial, the FutureDairy team will undertake further research needed to measure the sensitivity and accuracy of the application of the infrared camera. However the results are encouraging.

“Heat detection is always a challenge. It is time-consuming and the logistics can be tricky, especially with large herds or automatic milking systems. Many herd managers would welcome an affordable and less subjective tool to assist in heat detection; and the IR camera has the potential to be just that,” said Assoc Prof Kerrisk.

“Ultimately we’d like a way to automate the process; perhaps the cameras could be mounted at the dairy or somewhere close to the cows; to automatically measure vulval temperatures at least twice a day.

For more information, contact Dr Kendra Kerrisk, FutureDairy project leader ph 0428 101 372, email kendra.kerrisk@sydney.edu.au or www.futuredairy.com.au

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Infrared cameras has the potential to be an affordable and effective tool for detecting heat in dairy cows.

Media contact: This media has been released by Monks Communication on behalf of the FutureDairy project.

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